

International Diplomacy

*Contemporary United States
(1968–Present)*



Realpolitik

The Middle East

End of the Cold War

Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

Icons: For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will learn about the Cold War politics set out in the 1970s and be able to answer these key questions:

- What were President Nixon's policy goals?
- How did Nixon secure rapprochement with China and détente with the Soviet Union?
- What was the Nixon Doctrine?
- Why did détente end?



Looking back timeline



In order to contextualize American foreign policy in the 1970s and 1980s, use this timeline to recap previous key historical events. Either press on a date or drag the pointer along the timeline to find out information about what happened in each year.

Press **start** to begin.

start





Richard Nixon entered the presidency with a clear conception of foreign policy goals. Unlike his predecessor Lyndon B. Johnson, Nixon wanted his presidency to be defined by accomplishments in international affairs.

Nixon exercised very tight personal control over his foreign policy. He ignored his State Department and relied heavily on National Security Advisor **Henry Kissinger**, frequently using secret diplomacy to achieve his goals.

They practiced **realpolitik** – dealing with foreign policy in a practical manner rather than on the basis of ethics, morality or ideology.



How did Nixon's policy differ from what came before?



Richard Nixon had several key foreign policy goals that he aimed to put in place during his presidency by the process of realpolitik.

Can you match the different goals to the correct descriptions?

Press **start** to begin.

start





As early as 1969, Nixon began sending private, subtle signals of **rapprochement** to the leadership of the **People's Republic of China (PRC)**. He wanted to reestablish relations because:

- he saw China as a huge potential market for U.S. goods
- hostility between China and the Soviet Union intensified in 1970 and he hoped to gain advantage by playing one against the other
- he wanted to put pressure on North Vietnam to end the war.

In 1971, China invited the U.S. table tennis team to participate in a demonstration match. They became the first Americans to enter the communist mainland since 1949. This diplomatic success caused the U.S. to lift its trade embargo on China.



In July 1971, Nixon sent Kissinger on a secret mission to Beijing to negotiate a potential visit by the president. In the fall of 1971, the U.S. dropped its long opposition to the admission of China to the **United Nations (UN)**.

In February 1972, Nixon visited China and met with **Mao Zedong** and **Zhou Enlai** several times.



They established the **Shanghai Communiqué**, which still forms the basis of the U.S.' relations with China.





Rapprochement with China paved the way for improved relations with the Soviet Union and started a period of **détente** – the relaxing of tensions between the two superpowers.



The nuclear arms race was very expensive and both sides were keen to reduce it. The Soviets felt it was unsustainable and for the U.S., financing the Vietnam War was a huge cost.

The Soviets feared a China-U.S. alliance so after Nixon's visit to China, he received an invitation from Soviet leader **Leonid Brezhnev** to visit Moscow, which he did in May 1972.

Why else did both sides seek détente?





Nixon's visit to Moscow produced a number of agreements on trade, including an agreement to sell wheat to the Soviets. However, the most important agreements involved the **Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABMT)** and what came to be known as the **Strategic Arms Limitation Talks**, or **SALT I**.

SALT had been ongoing in Helsinki, Finland since 1969 and resulted in the ABMT, which limited defense systems to combat nuclear missiles.



SALT continued throughout the 1970s, with Brezhnev visiting the U.S. and **Gerald Ford** visiting the Soviet Union.



SALT I was a landmark event, changing U.S.-Soviet relations. It had some successes but did not end the arms race. Drag each statement to the correct place, depending on whether it was achieved or not achieved by SALT I.

Press **start** to begin.

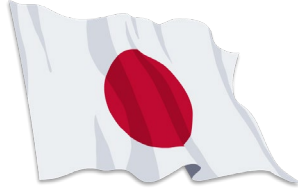
start



Do you think SALT I was a success?



Nixon believed that the old assumption of a **bipolar** world, in which the Soviet Union and U.S. were the only great superpowers, was outdated. Instead, he believed it was a **multipolar** world.



Nixon's visits to China and the Soviet Union seemed to support his belief that the communist world was not a single huge bloc.

His faith in realpolitik and a more flexible and less ideological approach also appeared to be justified.

How did multipolarity alter U.S.-Soviet relations?



Another key part of the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy was the **Nixon Doctrine**. This was the need to maintain stability in the developing world without involving the U.S. too deeply in local disputes and was a direct outcome of the U.S.'s experience in Vietnam. The Doctrine stated that:

- the U.S. would honor its treaties
- the U.S. would provide protection to its allies against nuclear threats
- in other cases, American allies should provide the manpower for their defense, though the U.S. would provide economic and limited military aid.



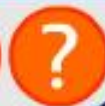


The Vietnam War was a long and expensive conflict that the U.S. became involved in during the Cold War. Under the Nixon Doctrine, the U.S. began to withdraw from Vietnam.

Read this passage about American withdrawal from Vietnam and select the correct word to fill each blank.

Press **start** to begin.

start





Throughout the 1970s, détente increased between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Presidents Ford and Carter followed Nixon's policies as fears about Soviet aggression waned slightly and cooperation between the countries increased.

Negotiations on a new treaty began in 1977 and in June 1979 Carter and Brezhnev signed **SALT II**. This banned new missile programs and reduced nuclear weapons in real terms.



Unfortunately, Congress never ratified SALT II, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 to fight an anticommunist uprising. This ended a decade of détente.

